

**Committee:** Security Council

**Topic:** The Question of Mali

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## Summary

Since the military coup of 2012 and the occupation of the northern regions by armed groups, followed by French-led military forces in January 2013 (which were handed over to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali in July 2014) - Mali has been experiencing conflict and instability. In fact, they have remained one of the most dangerous peacekeeping operations to date - and the crisis has been described as 'crimes against humanity' by human rights officials.

Attacks in schools within the Malian region have doubled in the last two years, ultimately resulting in the closure of 900 schools.<sup>1</sup> Potentially putting children at a greater risk of exploitation, child marriage and early pregnancy. Many of whom have been separated from their families in the attacks, and over 377,000 who need protection according to Unicef.<sup>2</sup> Nearly 202,000 people have fled violence in Mali since January 2019 with nearly 600 civilians killed in the first six months this year. The concerns pertaining food security have also rung alarm bells with 3.8 million people at the risk of food insecurity.<sup>3</sup>

The presence of armed groups, explosives and insecurity have hindered humanitarian access for NGOs in Mali.

## Definition of Key Terms

**Sharia law:** The Islamic law derived from the religious perceptions of Islam, particularly the Quran and the Hadith.

**Azawad:** The name given to northern Mali by Tuareg rebels. Its independence was declared unilaterally by the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad in 2012 after a Tuareg rebellion drove the Malian Army from the region. It rejoined Mali in February 2013 and comprises the Malian regions of Timbuktu, Kidal, Gao and part of the Mopti region.

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<sup>1</sup> Dehghan, S.K., 'Violence forces 1.9 million children out of classes in west and central Africa', The Guardian (2019)

<sup>2</sup> Maclean, R., 'Sharp rise in number of children killed in Mali's deadly attacks', The Guardian (2019)

<sup>3</sup> 'On-the-record update: Crisis in central and northern Mali', Norwegian Refugee Council (2019)

**Tuareg:** comprise of about 2 million nomadic people who live across the Sahara Desert, including the North Africa countries of Mali, Niger, Libya, Algeria and Chad. They are mainly Muslim.

**Bamako:** The capital and largest city of Mali, serving as Mali's seat of government and the country's economic and cultural hub.

**Timbuktu:** A West African city that was a center of Islamic scholarship under several African empires. They were added to the World Heritage List in 1988, housing sacred and historical Muslim texts and manuscripts.

## Background Information

In 2012, the military rose up against President Amadou Toumani Touré due to his inability to contain rebels fighting for autonomy in the north of the country. President Touré was replaced by an interim civilian administration headed by Dioncounda Traoré after he fled to Senegal as a result of the coup. However, it was the military who wielded control. Rebels have used the coup as an opportunity to gain control in the north and on the 6th of April, they declared independence for the 'state of Azawad'. Since then, they have been pushing further south.

Soon after, Islamist militants damaged Sufi tombs inside a 15th century mosque in Timbuktu and captured the city. This proved to be a key moment in the rebellion as Islamist groups like MUJAO and Ansar Dine took over the more secular group - the MNLA; with Ansar Dine displacing the MNLA as the main rebel group.

The conflict resulting in the clash between the rebel groups, France's efforts and peacekeepers has been ongoing since then. There have been multiple efforts made by both sides regarding peace-talks and cease-fire. None of which have been successful. As a result, the security and protection of civilians within and surrounding that area of conflict have been brutally denied.

## Major Countries and Organizations Involved

**Ansar Dine:** Islamist rebel group led by Tuareg rebel leader, Ag Ghaly, seeking independency or greater autonomy for the northern region of Mali - Azawad. In August 2003, they secured the release of 14, mainly German, tourists kidnapped by Algerian Salafi Group for Call and Combat (Al-Qaeda) and proceeded to negotiate further hostage releases in 2008, 2010 and 2011. The group's full name in Arabic is Harakat Ansar Al-Dine which translates to 'movement of the defenders of the faith'. Their main influence remains in the north-west where it captured Timbuktu in May 2012.

**al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM):** North African Islamist group previously involved in the Algerian civil war of the 1990s but has since approached a more international Islamist agenda. They first emerged after the Algerian Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC) aligned itself with Osama Bin Laden's international work. Their aim is to spread Islamic law as well as liberate Malians from French colonial legacy and have been known for kidnapping Westerners. Ransom money is believed to be their main source of revenue alongside drug-trafficking. They assisted Ansar Dine and Mjao to seize power of

key northern cities in 2012 recruits have been suspected of being a part of the police force that imposed Sharia in Timbuktu. There have also been reports of the AQIM providing training to Boko Haram (Islamist terrorist group in Nigeria), however, they have not been confirmed.

**Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO):** Islamist rebel group formed in mid-2011 with the objective of spreading the jihad to West Africa. They are advocates of the Islamic law and have waged a campaign of violence against Tuareg separatists. Led by Hamada Ould Mohamed Kheirou, they have been previously influenced by mainly north-eastern Mali, where it controlled key towns like Kidal and Gao until France launched a military offensive on the 11th of January 2013 to drive out the militants.

**The National Movement Liberation of Azawad (MNLA):** A secular Tuareg group seeking autonomy for Azawad since Mali's independence in 1960. They were former allies of Ansar Dine and Mujao but now remains opposed to Islamist groups

**Signed-in-Blood Battalion:** Led by the Algerian Mokhtar Belmokhtar, it was formed in 2012 as an AQIM offshoot after Belmokhtar fell out with the group. It has strong relations with Ansar Dine and Mujao. The militants follow the Saudi-inspired Salafi/Wahhabi sect of Islam which most Malian Muslims do not follow (a majority of which follow the rival Sufi sect).

**France:** France has been actively providing aid to Mali when it was requested by the government for fear that Islamist fighters would attack the capital - Bamako. Since then, France has taken on the responsibility of attempting to separate the shifting allegiances between extremist groups within that region. It has also gained credibility through UNSC Resolution No. 2085 allowing for the establishment of an international force to support Mali. The French intervention may have also been a result of interests in the region due to large oil, gas and mineral resources located near the Algerian oil fields. Not to mention the fact that Bamako is also home to roughly 6,000 French citizens

**The United States of America:** The USA has committed itself to international efforts to help Mali restore peace and stability following the 2012 coup. US foreign assistance has totaled to more than \$145 in 2017 and over \$81 million was requested for 2018.<sup>4</sup> They have been keen supporters for the June 20, 2015, peace accord.

**Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS):** A regional political and economic union of 15 countries located in West Africa established on 28 May 1975 through the Treaty of Lagos. It was created to promote trade, national cooperation and monetary union for economic growth and development in West Africa. It has overlooked initiatives to resolve the Malian conflict and drew up plans to send troops to Mali in an attempt to handle the situation before UN-approved troops were deployed

## Timeline of Events

<b>October 2011</b>	Ethnic Tuaregs launch a rebellion after returning with arms from Libya
<b>March 2012</b>	Army coup over the government's handling of the rebellion; a month later

<sup>4</sup> Bilateral Relations Fact Sheet, US Relations With Mali, 2018

	Tuareg and al-Qaeda linked fighters gain control of the North
<b>12 April 2012</b>	Interim President Dioncounda Traore is sworn in
<b>24 April 2012</b>	President Traore forms an interim government consisting of members of the military and technocrats
<b>June 2012</b>	Islamists destroy a mausoleum and capture Timbuktu (which was classified a UNESCO World Heritage site). This proved to be an attack on northern Mali's moderate Islam. Kidal and Gao from Tuaregs and begin to destroy historical Muslim shrines and manuscripts - imposing the Sharia law
<b>December 2012</b>	The UN Security Council authorised peacekeepers by ECOWAS
<b>10 January 2013</b>	Islamist fighters capture a central town, heightening concerns that they would reach Bamako leading Mali to request aid from France. The Malian army succeeds in driving the Islamists out of large areas of northern Mali. The French Operation Serval is authorised by the UN Security Council
<b>April 2013</b>	The UN Security Council authorises the establishment of the MINUSMA stabilization mission for Mali, to take over from the West African AFISMA mission
<b>June 2013</b>	Mali's interim government and the Tuareg rebels sign a cease-fire agreement mediated by Burkina Faso
<b>July 2013</b>	The UN force takes over the responsibility for securing the North
<b>11 August 2013</b>	Ibrahim Boubacar Keita is elected president by a clear majority in a run-off election
<b>September 2013</b>	The cease-fire agreement is buried - fighting between the rebels and government forces continue. Malian and UN soldier launch a major offensive
<b>22 May 2014</b>	Conflict breaks out in northern Mali and the MNLA takes Kidal and smaller towns in the region bordering Algeria and Niger MNLA signs a cease-fire agreement with the interim government in Bamako
<b>July 2014</b>	The Malian government and rebels start peace negotiations in Algeria. France launches Operation Barkhane in the Sahel to stem jihadist groups
<b>March 2015</b>	Negotiations in Algiers lead to a peace agreement. However, the Tuareg-led alliance, the CMA, does not sign the deal.
<b>13 May 2015</b>	Representatives of the CMA initiate a preliminary accord in Algier, demanding further negotiations.

## Relevant UN Treaties and Events

**The Peace and Reconciliation Accord:** Signed by all parties on the 20th of June 2015, the accord's plan includes mechanisms to demobilise armed militias; reform the Malian military; encourage crucial political; and institutional reforms; boosting development in northern Mali; and, most importantly, providing means for reconciliation between Mali's communities.

**UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali (MINUSMA):** On the 28th of June 2019, the mandate of MINUSMA was renewed for an additional 12 months to facilitate strategies aimed at protecting civilians, reducing intercommunal violence and to assist the re-establishment of authority and presence of central government in Mali.

**UN Security Council Resolution 2085:** This resolution was adopted by the Security Council on the 20th of December in 2012 attempting to address the immediate effects of the crisis in its early stages

**UN Security Council Resolution 2056:** This resolution was adopted by the Security Council on the 5th of July 2012 with the aim of providing Peace and Security in Africa.

**UN Security Council Resolution 2100:** This resolution was adopted on the 25th of April 2013, addressing the early problems rising from the beginning of the crisis

## Previous Attempts to solve the Issue

There have been peace negotiations between the Coordination of Movements for Azawad (CMA), the main rebel coalition in northern Mali, and the Algiers Platform, a coalition of pro-government armed groups. This ultimately resulted in the signing of an agreement in May and June 2015. The agreement also focused on short-term security through disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration. However, this was rejected by CMA members who were unhappy with it calling for a meeting of militants and combatants in favour of Azawad.

In 2014, the G5 Sahel was created by Mali, Burkina Faso, Chad, Mauritania and Niger in hopes of tackling security challenges. In July 2017, by the European Union, France, Germany, the UNDP, the African Development Bank and the World Bank to assist stabilisation and to improve the development in G5 Sahel countries. Other countries who have joined the Alliance include Spain, Italy, the United Kingdom and Luxembourg.

## Possible Solutions

Security still remains a major issue as a result of the ongoing conflict in Mali and needs to be addressed immediately in order for civilians to carry out daily life without being made vulnerable to possible attacks. Immediate and long-term plans need to be drawn out in order to address this situation as well as additional means for demilitarisation beyond disarming rebels. This is especially as insecurity has spread via the central Mopti and Segou regions to neighbouring Niger and Burkina Faso, threatening the northern regions of Benin, Ghana and Togo.

Furthermore, barriers restricting the distribution of aid from NGOs needs to be addressed immediately in order to alleviate the ramifications imposed on civilians as a result of the on-going violence.

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### Links for Further Reading

- <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2018/country-chapters/mali>
- <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2017/country-chapters/mali>
- <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-17582909>